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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the summative evaluation of the part-time learning project "Women and Politics," based on a 2-day forum sponsored in November 1986 by the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (Toronto, Canada) and the Committee for '94. The project consisted of a 6-part series featuring the speeches, workshops, and question periods from the forum. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the programs, to examine registrants' use of the resource materials that were made available, and to assess their opinions of the project. A random sample of 83 individuals who had registered for the available resource materials were interviewed on the telephone. These women were generally well-educated, 25-45 years of age, and held white-collar jobs outside the home. Over half of the group described themselves as politically active, approximately 60% of the group claimed that the learning experience had encouraged them to become more active in politics, and 33% reported that they had taken some action to become more politically involved. The findings indicate that "Women and Politics" provides a suitable model for other part-time learning projects. Comments by the interview participants and seven tables of survey findings are included. (Author/PPB)

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A SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF

WOMEN AND POLITICS

By

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Research Consultant

September 1988

Report No. 8 — 1988-89

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Abstract No. 8 — 1988-89

A SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF WOMEN AND POLITICS

By

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This paper reports the summative evaluation of the part-time learning project *Women and Politics* , based on a two-day forum sponsored in November 1986 by the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and the Committee for '94. The learning system consisted of a six-part series, produced by TVOntario, featuring the speeches, workshops, and question periods from the forum. Designed to accompany the broadcasts, a resource package included the transcripts of the programs, a booklet on how to initiate political action, a background paper, and a resource list; it was priced at $15.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the part-time learning system, to examine registrants' use of the resource materials, and to assess their opinions of the project.

To conduct the study, a sample of 83 individuals (41 percent of the total registration) were randomly selected for telephone interviews. The sample included a representative number of participants from Toronto, Ottawa, and other communities in Ontario.

Based on this sample, it was found that individuals who registered for *Women and Politics* were generally well-educated women, 25 to 45 years of age, who held white-collar jobs outside the home. Over half of the group described themselves as politically active.

The results of the study revealed that the *Women and Politics* project fulfilled its educational objectives. Apart from conveying important information, the series was an inspiration for many women and a strong incentive for them to become more involved in politics. As a result of viewing the programs and reading the resource materials, approximately 60 percent of the group claimed that the learning experience had encouraged them to become more active in politics. Roughly one-third of the group were able to give concrete examples of activities they had initiated as result of the project, including everything from joining a political party to deciding to become a political candidate.

The programs and the resource materials were well received, and participants approved of both the content of this learning system and the way in which it was structured.

In view of these findings, it was concluded that televised forums or conferences, such as *Women and Politics,* constitute worthwhile part-time learning courses, given that they address topics of general interest to the TVOntario viewing audience. As such, *Women and Politics* provides a suitable model for future part-time learning projects.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper reports the summative evaluation of *Women and Politics,* a learning series based on a two-day forum sponsored in November 1986 by the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and the Committee for '94. From videotapes of the forum, TVOntario produced a six-part series to which it added related print materials.

The purpose of the forum (and the part-time learning project) was to give women an opportunity to learn firsthand, from a group of women prominent in Canadian politics, how to gain and wield political power. Political leaders discussed what it takes to build a political career, run a campaign, organize a lobby, and deal with the press.

The six-part series, produced by TVOntario, included the speeches, workshops, and question periods from the forum. Rosemary Brown, a veteran of British Columbia politics, hosted the series and provided summaries of the sessions. The series was broadcast during March and April 1988 and repeated the following summer. To accompany the broadcasts, TVOntario produced a learning resource package, offered at a cost of $15, that included:

1. A booklet containing transcripts of the speeches, together with commentary by Rosemary Brown and a bibliography.

2. The booklet *Play from Strength: A Canadian Woman's Guide to Initiating Political Action,* written by Penny Kome.

3. The background paper *Women in Politics: Becoming Full Partners in the Political Process,* publishedby the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

4. A resource list of various groups and agencies across Ontario that offer information about women and politics.

I. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this summative evaluation was to:

1. Assess the impact of the television programs and the resource materials on those who viewed the programs and ordered the package.

2. Examine the registrants' use of the resource package.

3. Examine the registrants' opinions about various aspects of the programs and the print materials.

4. Identify potential strengths and weaknesses in the *Women and Politics* learning system so as to aid in the future development of similar packages

II. METHOD

In May1988, telephone interviews were conducted with 83 people who had ordered the *Women and Politics* resource package. This sample group was randomly selected from a list of 203 individuals who telephoned or wrote TVOntario to request the learning materials (registrants), and represented approximately 41 percent of the total registration as of May 1988.

A stratified sampling plan was used to ensure a geographical distribution of the sample that would be representative of the total registration. Thus, 52 percent of the members in the sample were selected from the metropolitan Toronto area, 15 percent were from Ottawa, and the remaining 33 percent were selected from 39 other communities across Ontario.

All the telephone interviews were conducted during a one-week period. The interviewers were instructed to make at least three attempts to contact each member of the sample. These attempts were to be made during different times of the day (e.g., morning, afternoon, and evening). If registrant could not be contacted after three attempts, or if he or she declined to be interviewed, the interviewers were instructed to randomly select another individual from the same geographical grouping.

To qualify for an interview, participants were required to have viewed at least one of the programs and to have read or browsed through the resource materials. The interviews were approximately 10-15 minutes in length.

III. FINDINGS

The Sample

Of the total sample, 87 percent of the participants were female and 13 percent were male.

Slightly over half the sample (58 percent) described themselves as politically active. Table 1 describes the political activities of this group. As seen in the table, almost half of those participants who claimed to be politically active had at some time "helped with political campaigns."

Table 1. Political activities of the participants.

Type of Activity	Percent of the Sample
Belonged to a lobby group	34 %
Helped with a political campaign	46 %
Held a political office	10 %
Worked with political parties	27 %

N = 48

Table 2 below reports the age of the participants in the interview sample. The largest proportion of the sample (33 percent) was 31 to 40 years of age.

Table 2. Age of participants

Age	Percent of the Sample
Under 20	1 %
21 to 30	24 %
31 to 40	33 %
41 to 50	20 %
51 to 60	18 %
Over 60	4 %
	100 %

N = 83

Table 3 reports the highest level of education achieved by the participants. As seen in the table, more than half of the sample had completed university.

Table 3. Education of participants.

Highest Level Completed	Percent of Sample
Some secondary school	1 %
Completed secondary school	10 %
Some community college	4 %
Completed community college	10 %
Some university	16 %
Completed university	39 %
Some/completed university	20 %
	100 %

N = 83

Eighty percent of the sample reported that they were currently employed; most were in white collar professions such as nursing, teaching, writing, and management. An additional 16 percent of the sample were students, 2 percent were homemakers, and 2 percent were retired.

Approximately 48 percent of the sample were married, 35 percent were single, and the remainder were either widowed, divorced, or separated. Fifty-three percent had children still living at home.

In summary, the sample could be described as consisting largely of well-educated working women, most of whom were 25 to 45 years of age. Slightly more than half of the sample described themselves as politically active.

Motivation for Registering

In the interviews, participants were asked why they had ordered the *Women and Politics* resource package. The majority (62 percent) claimed they had ordered the materials out of general interest in the topic. They had seen the programs, wanted the transcripts, or were generally impressed with the speakers and interested in learning more.

The next largest group (17 percent) ordered the package because they were either teaching a course or enrolled in a course in a related area such as women's studies. An additional 12 percent of the sample ordered the package with the expectation that it would help them with their own political activities. Seven percent requested the materials because they themselves wished to run for a political office or because they knew someone who was a candidate.

The Television Programs

Table 4 reports how many participants in the sample viewed each of the six programs in the series. The first three programs were viewed by more participants than the last three programs.

Table 4. Percent of the sample who viewed each program.

Program	Percent of Sample
Political Women Tell What It Takes, 1	83 %
Political Women Tell What It Takes, 2	76 %
Sex and Politics/Influence and Power	64 %
Can You be a Feminist in Politics?	58 %
Running and Winning	43 %
Mobilizing around Issues	47 %

N = 83

When asked to rate the programs on a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 is poor and 7 excellent), the participants gave the programs an overall rating of 6, or very good.

Of all the speakers, Iona Campagnolo was the clear favorite; many said they ordered the resource package because of her speech. Sixty-six percent of the sample perceived her as the most effective speaker. Barbara McDougall and Michele Landsburg were also considered effective, but by a much smaller margin (15 percent and 10 percent respectively).

Participants did not express strong disappointment with any of the speakers, with the possible exception of Alexa McDonough. Eight participants (10 percent of the sample) were critical of McDonough, remarking that she was "not well groomed," "inarticulate," "too strong," or "did not offer a different perspective."

As to the various components of the programs (speakers, interviews, and question periods), most of the participants were satisfied with the format and the way the presentation was structured. Approximately one-quarter of the sample, however, indicated that they would have preferred longer question periods. The speeches were generally seen as being the "right length."

The majority of the sample also perceived the summaries presented by Rosemary Brown as "very useful" or "useful."

The Resource Package

Table 5 reports the percentage of participants who read or browsed through each of the materials in the resource package. As seen in the table, the transcripts were used by the largest proportion of participants.

Table 5. Participants' use of the resource package.

Resource Material	Percent of Sample
The program transcripts	94 %
The background paper	73 %
The booklet *Play from Strength*	76 %
The resource list	64 %

N = 83

Of the materials in the resource package, the transcripts were perceived as most useful (49 percent), followed by the booklet (20 percent) and the resource list (7 percent).

The Educational Impact

The participants were asked to indicate the area in which the series had had the most impact on them: general information, practical skills and advice, or inspiration. As seen in Table 6, most claimed that the series had provided them with general information or inspiration. Fewer than one-quarter of the participants reported that they had acquired practical skills or advice.

Table 6. What do you feel you gained most?

Educational Impact	Percent of Sample
General information	57 %
Inspiration	55 %
Practical skills and advice	23 %
None of the above	1 %
Don't know	–
N = 83	

Note: Participants often cited more than one area of educational impact.

To follow up on this question, participants were read a list of other ways they might have benefited from the series. Their response to the question appears in Table 7.

Table 7. Do you feel that you acquired any of the following?

Educational Impact	Percent of Sample Responding "Yes"
A greater familiarity with the political environment	86 %
A greater awareness of the problems women face in politics	86 %
A clearer understanding of the skills required to succeed and how to acquire these skills	86 %
A clearer understanding of how to go about entering politics	69 %
N = 83	

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The participants were also asked if they had been encouraged by the programs and resource materials to enter politics, either as workers or as candidates for public office. Approximately one-quarter of the group claimed that the experience had encouraged them to become more active in politics, though not necessarily as workers or candidates. Another one-quarter of the group reported that they planned to become more active as workers; and 8 percent announced their decision to enter politics as candidates. The remainder claimed that they were already involved in one way or another. A relatively small proportion of the sample (6 percent) found the programs "discouraging."

After viewing the programs, approximately one-third of the sample reported that they had taken "action" of some kind to become more politically involved. The kinds of activities they initiated as a result of *Women and Politics* were as follows:

* I volunteered to work in the next federal election.
* I've begun to read more.
* I went to a political meeting.
* I now watch the debates in the House of Commons.
* I want to run for office at the municipal level.
* I'm organizing women to demand that bookstores stock more books on women's issues.
* I used some of the tips for dealing with the media.
* I began talking to friends about this.
* I got in touch with a political party and attended a speech.
* I called a candidate and offered to work for her.
* I began reading up on the issues in the newspaper.
* I encouraged others to become involved.
* I wrote a paper on women and politics.
* I joined the women's group of a political party.
* I became more active with the Status of Women committee.
* I plan to run as a candidate.
* I've written letters to political groups.
* I've joined the Green Party.

* I've become more active in environmental issues and have begun to attend political meetings.

* I've become involved in canvassing.

* I've become interested in a parliamentary internship.

Participants were also asked to name the most important thing they had learned from the *Women and Politics* forum. In response to this question, there appeared to be four recurring themes:

1. Women have a special contribution to make to politics.

"Women have to be made aware that their contribution to politics is more valuable than men's. Women can make a difference in politics—their special qualities are valuable."

"We need to shape the structures that shape us."

"Women have something to say and to offer, and we can do well. Women bring a wider scope to politics."

2. It is possible for women to succeed in politics.

"There is room for women in politics. If I want to enter politics, I can do it because other women have."

"There needs to be unity among people sympathetic to. women in politics, but there are many roadblocks. It can be a reality."

"I learned that it is possible to enter politics and make a change. Women have to become more involved."

"I realized that it is time for women to stand up and be counted. Great ideas of how to go about it. I wanted to get off my fence."

3. In order for women to succeed in politics, they must support one another.

"Women must support women and accept each other's differences."

"It encouraged me to accept responsibility for women from high-profile women. I felt good about this. I felt they were there for women."

"I realized that I must become more involved and support more women in politics."

"I learned that there are a lot of women who think as I do—it's very comforting."

4. Women face tremendous obstacles in politics, and they must persevere in a long, hard struggle to succeed.

"I learned that others share my frustrations of getting funding, finding support, etc."

"Women have to work twice as hard as men to get anywhere."

"I didn't realize it was that difficult for women, and that women at all levels of politics face the same barriers."

"I learned that women are on their way. I tend to get discouraged, but was hopeful after seeing the programs. I was impressed by the way these women overcame the obstacles and reached the inner circles."

"It's even tougher on you personally to be a female politician. Personal costs are high. But I came away with a feeling of hope because all these women survived."

"Nobody is going to hand you anything, you have to prove yourself."

As a final question, participants were asked if they were in any way disappointed with either the television series or the resource materials. The overwhelming majority maintained that they were not disappointed at all. A small proportion of the participants (6 percent), however, disliked the summaries presented by Rosemary Brown, describing them as too simplistic.

IV. A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The participants in this telephone survey were selected at random from a list of course registrants. By and large, the sample consisted of well-educated women, 25 to 45 years of age, who held white-collar jobs outside the home. Over half of the group described themselves as politically active. This is interesting in that it suggests that the series attracted a number of women who were not already involved in politics.

Most of the participants ordered the *Women and Politics* resource package out of general interest in the topic. They had seen one or more of the programs, were impressed with the speakers, and wished to learn more. Iona Campagnolo's speech, in the first program of the series, was especially influential in attracting and involving viewers.

Overall, the participants considered the series very good. They were generally satisfied with the format of the programs, the length of the speeches, and the summaries presented by host Rosemary Brown. The first three programs were viewed by more participants than the last three programs, though even these were viewed by almost half the sample. Iona Campagnolo was clearly the most popular speaker, followed by Barbara McDougall, and Michele Landsburg. None of the speakers evoked serious criticism.

The materials in the resource package were similarly well received. A majority of the participants claimed that they had read or browsed through each of the print pieces. The program transcripts were perceived as the most useful of these.

Almost all the participants claimed that they had benefited in some way from the series. In general, they found the programs inspiring as well as informative. Participants answered that they had acquired a greater familiarity with the political environment, a greater awareness of the problems facing women politicians, and a clearer understanding of what is required to succeed in politics. To a somewhat lesser extent, they claimed that they also had learned how to go about entering politics. Generally speaking, however, the *Women and Politics* project seems to have been more successful in conveying general information than in providing practical skills and information of a how-to nature.

According to the participants in the study, the principal messages conveyed by the series were: (1) that it is possible for women to succeed in politics, (2) that women politicians face tremendous obstacles in their struggle for power, (3) that women must support women, and (4) that women are needed in politics and have a special contribution to make.

As a result of viewing the programs and reading the resource materials, approximately 60 percent of the group claimed that the learning experience had encouraged them to become more active in politics. Roughly one-third of the group were able to give concrete examples of activities that they had undertaken as a result of this learning experience, such as joining a political party, offering a local politician support, or deciding to run for a municipal office.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this evaluation suggest that the *Women and Politics* project succeeded in fulfilling its educational objectives. Apart from conveying important information, the series was an inspiration for many women and a strong incentive for them to become more involved in politics.

It can also be concluded, from the success of this project, that televised forums or conferences can constitute worthwhile part-time learning courses, given that they address topics of general interest to the TVOntario viewership. Although the programs consisted primarily of "talking heads," the participants did not express any dissatisfaction with the format. Their interest in the topic and the speakers far overshadowed their concern for the structure of the presentation.

In this project, and probably in others, the first program in the series proved to be a very important factor in attracting an audience and encouraging people to register for the course. The speech by Iona Campagnolo was undoubtedly instrumental in stimulating the audience's interest and involvement.

The selection of resource materials accompanying the series was also seen as suitable. The research indicates that participants used the materials and benefited from them—particularly the program transcripts.

In view of these findings, it appears that *Women and Politics* provides a suitable model for other part-time learning projects.